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ABSTRACT

This paper proposes a matrix of notional categories for classifying grammatical structures. The use of the matrix is illustrated through question forms. Communicative competence in a language presupposes mastery of the grammatical system of that language. Therefore, in adopting a communicatively appropriate syllabus, containing varieties of linguistic notions and functions, one must ensure that grammar is not sacrificed. In acknowledging this, three categories of meanings of utterances are presented--semantico-grammatical, modal, and communicative function. Each of these categories is isolated and identified for the question form. Also discussed is the development of a check list matrix to aid the syllabus constructor in ensuring that a specific grammatical structure will be taught within a notional framework. This check list allows the adaptation of a synthetic syllabus into a more analytic and notional syllabus. (Author/JK)

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A NOTIONAL MATRIX FOR GRAMMATICAL FORMS: TEACHING QUESTION FORMS

Carolyn L. Shields

This article explores the concepts of developing a notional syllabus through the teaching of question forms. It is suggested that the three categories of meanings of utterances: a) semantico-grammatical; b) modal; c) communicative function (Wilkins, 1976) can be isolated and identified for a grammatical structure, i.e., the question form in English. Then a check list matrix can be developed to aid the syllabus constructor in ensuring that a specific grammatical structure will be taught within a notional framework. This check list will allow the adaptation of a synthetic syllabus into a more analytic (and, therefore, notional) syllabus.

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The goal of an ESL constructor or of an ESL teacher is to develop materials to help students achieve communicative competence. Recently the approach suggested is that of giving our syllabus a more semantic thrust, including not only the rules of grammar but also the rules of communication which must include functional and notional categories of language. D. A. Wilkins in Notional Syllabuses (1976) has said that in the realm of the syllabus constructor there have been two major strategies for the organizing of materials to teach language:

(1) A synthetic teaching strategy - one in which the different components of the languages are taught separately and in a step-by-step procedure so that there is a gradual accumulation of the parts into a whole structure by the learner. This most often produces a grammatical syllabus.

(2) An analytical teaching strategy - one in which there is little attempt at careful linguistic control. There is a greater variety of linguistic structures permitted and "the learner's task is to approximate his own linguistic behavior more and more closely to the global language." (Wilkins, 1976, 2) This produces a notional syllabus.

Accepting the notion of the analytic approach as viable, this paper will propose a matrix of notional categories for classifying grammatical structures, using the specific grammatical structure of the Question Form for illustration of the use of the matrix. For in syllabus construction, the textbook writer, cum ESL teacher, must keep in mind that knowing a language means having mastered the grammatical system. What we must do is ensure that we have not sacrificed the grammar in adopting a more communicatively appropriate syllabus which contains varieties of linguistic notions and functions.

This need to ensure the learning of the grammar in an analytical teaching strategy is suggested by D. A. Wilkins as one of two alterna-

tives, the syllabus constructor has. The stronger alternative would allow a syllabus to provide opportunity for grammatical facts to motivate choice decisions but in general the semantic criteria will be used from the start to organize the material. For example, Wilkins (1976, 8) suggests the ordering of verb tense forms might be different in a notional syllabus because of the wish to teach the ability to distinguish between present, past, and future time, early on in the learning sequence.

The weaker alternative would be to only use the notional and functional categories in the later stages of a course, with a synthetic construction in the early stages. This weaker alternative has been adopted in this paper. The matrix of notions which can help classify grammatical structures will be used analytically in the later stages of application but synthetically in the early stages.

1. Teaching the Synthetic Syllabus - Question Forms

Examples of specific structures which must be taught in teaching the question form are:

(3) a. Is she an American?
Were they here yesterday?
Did you go downtown?
Do you want it now or later?
Would you like tea or coffee?
Have you ever visited Paris?
Who is intelligent?
Who can speak Swahili?
When does Mabel study?
Where must they go tonight?
How long have you been here?
When did he see you, this morning or last night?
etc.

b. The question forms covered are the:
Yes/No Question forms - in appropriate tenses

WH - Question of various forms
Alternative Question form
(This paper will not consider the Tag Question or the Negative Question. These two question forms necessitate a certain knowledge of presupposition which must be taught and can certainly be included in a notional matrix.)

A synthetic treatment of Question forms has been proposed by the author and R. A. Robson in a paper presented at TESOL in 1974. This treatment involved an extensive presentation (the use of a spiral approach) of the question structures as they are introduced with the teaching of tenses. The idea was to present the students "a limited amount of the data on which to base generalizations in a number of consecutive teaching units." We suggested the following sequences:

(4) Verb form and tenses
Present of be
Single present of regular verbs
Present progressive
Simple past
Present perfect
Future will be going to and will
Past progressive
Modals brought together
Past perfect
Sequence of tenses

(5) Synthetic Question form sequence
a. Yes/No Question (and short answers) for each verb form/tense
1. Present tense of Be
2. Present tense of regular verbs - DO
3. Present progressive
etc.
b. Yes/No Question - Alternative with verb forms/tenses
c. Who/What - as subject of Be
d. Who/What - as objects
e. Who/What - as subject of verbs other than Be
f. Who/What else - as subject or object
g. When/Where - questions of TIME and PLACE
h. What time questions
i. When/Where questions - Alternative
j. What Aux _____ do questions of verb phrase
k. What Aux _____ do question Alternative
l. How questions for MANNER, AGE, QUALITY, DEGREE and AMOUNT

m. Whose - questions for POSSESSIVES
n. Whose - questions for POSSESSIVES - Alternative
o. How many/much questions
p. What/Which NP questions
q. What/Which kind of NP questions
r. Why/What . . . for questions

This sequence was based on six criteria: linguistic simplicity; semantic simplicity; simplicity of teaching or learning; relative frequency of use; relative potential for occurrence in the language; usefulness in teaching other aspects of the language. In many ways these criteria incorporate some notional and functional and pedagogical categories. Using the notional matrix, this paper proposes how these structures and this sequence can be made more analytic.

2. The Notional Framework

Providing a notional framework as a check off matrix, allows the ESL teacher to ensure that the presentation of grammatical material can be fit into an analytical syllabus. The assumption is that there has been some initial, early teaching using a synthetic syllabus and that we as materials writers and ESL teachers wish to take Wilkins' weaker alternative and incorporate notional features into the teaching of the grammatical form of Questions.

Wilkins' notional framework is sketchy and limited but workable. The framework has three major components based on "three types of meaning that can be conveyed in the uttering of a sentence." (1976, 21). Look at the framework in (6).

(6) Wilkins Framework

(6)

WILKINS FRAMEWORK
(Adapted from Wilkins, 1976, National Syllabus, Chap. 2)

A. SEMANTICO - GRAMMATICAL CATEGORY
   1. Time
      a. Point of Time
      b. Duration
      c. Time Relations
      d. Frecuency
      e. Sequence
   2. Quantity
      a. Divided and undivided references
      b. Numerals
      c. Operations
   3. Space
      a. Dimension
      b. Location
      c. Motion
   4. Relational Meaning
      a. Sentential relations
         1. Agent
         2. Initiator
         3. Object
         4. Beneficiary
         5. Instrument
      b. Predication and attribution
   5. Deixis
      a. Time
      b. Place
      c. Person

B. MODAL CATEGORY
   1. Scale of certainty
      a. Impersonalized
         certainty, probability, possibility, nil certainty, negation
      b. Personalized
         conviction, conjecture, doubt, disbelief
   2. Scale of commitment
      a. Intention
      b. Obligation

C. CATEGORIES OF COMMUNICATIVE FUNCTION
   1. Judgement and evaluation
      a. Valuation
      b. Verdiction
         committal, release
      c. Approval
      d. Disapproval
   2. Suasion
      a. Inducement
      b. Compulsion
      c. Prediction
      d. Tolerance
   3. Argument
      a. Information
         asserted, sought, denied
      b. Agreement
      c. Disagreement
      d. Concession
   4. Rational enquiry and exposition
   5. Personal emotions
      a. Positive
      b. Negative
   6. Emotional relations
      a. Greetings
      b. Sympathy
      c. Gratitude
      d. Flattery
      e. Hostility

Briefly, the semantico-grammatical category (6.A) is the meaning expressed by grammatical systems. Content and form of sentences are determined by the nature of the grammatical and semantic meaning. Certain meaning distinctions are conveyed in this way. For example, in the subcategory (6.A.1.a) Point in time, the meaning can be either deictic or non-deictic (Deixis, subcategory 6.A.5) The adverbial of (7.a) is non-deictic in response to the question of (7.b).

(7) a. on July 18th
b. When were you born?

That is to say, it is possible to know the exact time without reference to the context. But in (8.a), the response is deictic in that we must know the moment of utterance to get the meaning. This is commonly marked by a tense system.

(8) a. on July 18th
b. When does John get his apartment? (after the moment of utterance)
c. When did John get his apartment? (previous to the moment of utterance)

The modal category (6.B) is the meaning expressed in a variety of linguistic devices which allows users of the language to express their attitudes toward an utterance. Attitudes like those listed in (6.B.1.a). A distinction in meaning within this category would take the following form in English:

(9) Question: Is she angry?
a. She must be angry. (certainty)
b. She ought to be angry. (probability)
c. It is possible that she is angry. (possibility)
d. I am sure she is angry. (conviction)
e. I don't suppose she is angry. (doubt)

Notice that (9.e) can be either a statement form or a question form, but the modality of doubt exists either way. This meaning category may

use a modal auxiliary as in (9.a) or another grammatical form as in (9.b) and (9.c) or (9.d) or (9.e).

The categories of communicative function (6.C) include not only those structures that have been called speech acts (Searle, 1970) but all the meanings conveyed by an utterance "that is a matter of the function of the sentence (utterance) as a whole in the larger context in which it occurs" (Wilkins, 1976, 22). One example, in the subcategory Tolerance (6.C.2.d), the function of an utterance is designed to affect the behavior of others by offering no hinderance to a proposal. The verbs may act as performatives as in (10.a) or we may use other grammatical expressions to have the communicative function of Tolerance as in (10.b). Notice that question forms may be used to express this function also as in (10.c).

(10) a. I advise you to get to work.

I $\left\{\begin{array}{c}\text{suggest}\\ \text{or}\\ \text{advise}\end{array}\right\}$ (that) you get to work.

b. You could get to work.
. Suppose you get to work.
c. Could you get to work?
How about getting to work?

3. The Notional Matrix Check List

Taking the framework suggested in (6), we as syllabus constructors can now look at the grammatical question forms indicated in (5.a-r). The syllabus constructor can use a check list format to see the correlations possible between the major notional framework and the question forms to be taught.

As already indicated in (3), the Tag Question and the Negative Question have been left out of consideration in this paper because of the

special emphasis that may be needed to present these forms analytically. I do not deny that there is a need to treat these forms also. At this time, however, I would like to limit the check-off matrix to the forms indicated in (5).

The chart in (11) gives us the check-off format that may be used.

(11) Notional Matrix Chart - Check-off format for Question Forms

(11) Notional Matrix Chart - Check-off format for Question Forms

	Semantico/Grammatical					Modal		Communicative Function					
	T	Q	S	R	D	S. of Cert.	S. of Com.	J	S	A	R	PE	FR
Yes/No Q	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Yes/No Q - A	✓	✓		✓	✓			✓			✓		
Who/what - subj. be	✓	✓		✓	✓				✓		✓	✓	
Who/what - obj.	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓	
Who/what - subj. reg. V	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	
Who/what else	✓		✓		✓						✓	✓	✓
When/where	✓				✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		
What time	✓				✓		✓						
When/where - A	✓		✓		✓		✓				✓		
What Aux do	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
What Aux do - A	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓				✓	✓	✓
How	✓		✓	✓	✓						✓		✓
Whose	✓	✓		✓	✓			✓			✓		
Whose - A	✓	✓		✓	✓								
How many/much	✓	✓			✓	✓		✓	✓		✓		
What/which NP	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓						✓		
What/which kind NP	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓						✓		
Why/what for	✓	✓			✓		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	

As indicated, all of the question forms analyzed have the semantico-grammatical categories of Time (T - on the chart) and Deixis (D - on the chart). As Wilkins says ". . . it is scarcely possible to produce a sentence without being involved in expressing time concepts." (1976, 25) The facts for English are that the time markers (tenses, adverbials) used have both deictic and non-deictic aspects.

The "when" and "what time" questions are those most directly related to the Point-in-Time subcategory, since adverbials like those in (12.a) are what is being questioned.

(12) a. now, then
at twenty-five past eight
yesterday, today, tomorrow
this/yesterday/tomorrow morning
on Monday the 23rd of April 1957
this/last/next month (Wilkins, 1976, 25)

b. Q How long did you stay? (Duration)
A For two hours.
Q When is he leaving?
A After work.

c. Q Who else would sit there? (Time Relation)
A His brother (would . . .) - would establishes the event is future in relation to a past event

d. How often have you done this? (Frequency)
Is he going on Mondays?
When do you go to work by car?

e. What did he do next? (Sequence)
Who saw Mary first?
Have you ever talked or walked with her?

Question forms like those in (12.b) show the subcategory of Duration. And in presenting all of the question forms, the syllabus constructor will be showing Time Relations, Frequency and Sequence as in (12.c-e).

The semantico-grammatical categories of Quantity, Space and Relational Meaning are also represented by various question forms. Samples of these types of meanings are indicated in (13) - (15).

(13) a. Q How much/many _____ do you want? (all forms of Quantity)
A some/a few/a little, etc.
three
b. What kind of { languages / love } does he know? (Divided/individual reference)

c. Is two plus four, six or seven? (Operations)
Do ten and twenty make twenty-two?

(14) a. How { long / short / tall / high / fat / : } is that thing? (Space, Dimensions)

b. Where did he put it? (Location)
c. What was he doing as he began to leave? (Motion)

(15) a. Who drank the wine? (Relational Meaning, Agent)
b. Who took them to the cleaners? (Initiator)
c. Who was taken to the cleaners? (Object)
vs.
What was taken to the cleaners?
What did he want? (Object)
What opened?
d. (to) Who (m) did John give a raise (to)? (Beneficiary)
e. What opened the door? (Instrument)
f. Who is fat? (Predication and Attribution)
Who is my wife's brother?
Who is a pilot?
What is black and white and read all over?

The modal category of notional meaning is represented by two subcategories, the Scale of Certainty and the Scale of Commitment. In classifying the question forms in this matrix, we must look at the modal categories more closely.

In the Scale of Certainty, the modal meaning has to do with "the speakers report of the likelihood of the predication being valid." (Wilkins, 1976, 38). When making questions, the native speaker is questioning the hearer's belief in this certainty. Questions of the form:

(16) a. Impersonalized Certainty
Is he coming? (Affirmation)
Does she have it?

Is he certain to be there? (Certainty)
Where must he be at 5:00 p.m.?
Can it be true? (Probability)
Ought / Should } he go?
What should he take with him?
Might he see her tonight?

b. Personalized Certainty
Do you believe they are here? (Conviction)
What is he convinced will happen?
When does she suspect he might come? (Conjecture)
Do you suppose she'll do it? (Doubt)

The Scale of Commitment covers the meanings of utterances that report responsibility or obligation for a commitment and the imposition of a commitment (command). In most cases, the question forms question the hearers' intent with regard to a proposition, as in (17.a.):

(17) a. Will you pick me up? (Intention)
May I drop in?

b. Must they pay by the end of the week? (Obligation)
Are we liable for the entire cost?
Does he have to take the test?

or the hearers' obligation with regard to a proposition as in (17.b). As indicated in the chart, the questions which question a predication or the subject of the predication fall into the modal category. What we as syllabus constructors must do is ensure that the learner is exposed to the modal category of meaning carried by these question forms. A special characteristic of English is that the majority of modal meaning is carried in the modal auxiliaries and as Jespersen points out, the same verbs can be used in English to express necessity, possibility and impossibility on one hand and command permission and prohibition on the other (Jespersen, 1924, 325).

In considering the categories of communicative function, we find six types of communication function exist; that is six general things that we do with language. We make assessments (J - for Judgment in the

in the chart); we attempt to affect the behavior of others (Suasion - S - in the chart); we exchange information and views (A - in the chart - for Argument); we make rational inquiry (R - in the chart); we express our personal emotional reactions (PE); and finally we express emotional relations (ER) like sympathy or gratitude or hostility. There is a great overlap in these functions and the actual grammatical forms that are used. We as ESL teachers must ensure that our students learn the use of these grammatical forms in their various functions.

Some of the question forms used for various functions are as follows:

(18) a. Judgment
How much will this cost next year? (Valuation)
Is he allowed to do this? (Release)
Are you free to go? (Disapproval/Release)
What can you blame him for? (Disapproval)
Why did they do it?

b. Suasion
Where do you think we should put it? (Inducement)
Shall we / Why don't we } go to the zoo? (Tolerance)
How about (us) / What about } going to the zoo?
Do you think it is advisable?

Requests are a grammatical form carrying the Argument function. Quite often these requests take the form of questions, as in:

(18) c. Argument
Would you mind / Do you mind } shutting the window?
Would you like to shut the window?
Could / Would / Will / Can } you ... } shut the window?
Would / Will } you be { so good as / so kind as / good enough / kind enough } to ... }
May / Can } I trouble you for a light?
Have you got a light? (Wilkins, 1976, 51)

The Rational Enquiry subcategory must include questions that ask for suppositions, conjectures, assumptions, verification, contrast, result and many others. Question forms like those in (18.d).

(18) d. Rational Enquiry
Is it going to rain?
Would you like to go?
Where is the ball you used yesterday?

The last two subcategories of communicative function are most often grammatical forms which make statements but all of these statements can be questioned.

(19) a. (Personal Emotion)
Are you angry?
Did she feel unhappy?
When was he lost?

But we can also use the question form to show our emotion (19.a). Are you angry? can be used by the speaker to show surprise or puzzlement for example.

b. Emotional Relations
How can I help you? (Sympathy)
How do you do? (Greeting)
How will I ever repay you? (Gratitude)
What would we ever have done without your help?

The utterances in (19.b) are samples of sentences which may be question forms or statements which can be used to express the communicative function of emotional relations. What we must remember is that whatever the grammatical form may be, the communicative function of an utterance is determined by the context and intent of the speaker/hearer, and our students must be exposed to the use of all these forms.

This notional matrix is sketchy but has been proposed and used by the author as a good check-off list for ensuring a more analytic syllabus.

The ESL teacher who is really always a syllabus constructor can use it to help summarize not only grammatical characteristics of a structure, like questions, but also notional and functional characteristics of the question forms. It is suggested more work needs to be done with all of the significant grammatical structures of English.

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